

ALABAMA MINING MUSEUM,  
DORA SCHOOL GYMNASIUM  
Birmingham Industrial District  
Between US 78 and Burlington  
North Rail Road  
Dora  
Walker County  
Alabama

HABS No. AL-978-A

HABS  
ALA  
64-DORA,  
2A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

ADDENDUM TO  
ALABAMA MINING MUSEUM,  
DORA SCHOOL, GYMNASIUM  
Birmingham Industrial District  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO  
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Location: 35 miles northwest of Birmingham, just off WC 81, Dora, Walker County, Alabama. The site is divided into two 10 acre tracts. Primary access is currently available from US 78 along Walker County 81, approximately three miles to the south.

Ownership: The 10 acres of the site on which the mining museum and its collections are located is owned by the Walker County Board of Education. The football field is situated on 10 acres of land owned by the City of Dora. Both properties have been leased by the Alabama Mining Museum for 50 years at a rate of \$1.00 per year.

Date of Construction: 1939

Builder/Architect/Engineer: WPA

Project Information: This report is based on written documentation donated by the Birmingham Historical Society, reformatted to HABS/HAER guidelines.

Significance: State's only museum devoted to preservation of coal mining collections and heritage

Historical Overview: The Alabama Mining Museum, established in 1982 "to develop a museum and appropriate service to compliment this museum" is housed in the former Dora High School Gymnasium.

Condition: The museum facility and rolling stock are in good condition. Restoration of Wyatt Elementary has just been completed and restoration of the depot is currently ongoing.

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## DESCRIPTION

The former Dora High School Gymnasium is a three-story sandstone structure with wooden truss roof built in 1939 as a WPA project. The museum site is situated above a honey comb of former coal mines.

Collections of the museum include photographs; bookkeeping records of the DeBardleben Coal Company, one of the larger mine operators in the surrounding area; correspondence, claquer and memorabilia documenting area mining operations and community life. Current exhibits include displays of pick and shovel mining, a turn of the century mining camp residence interior, a blacksmith's forge, mine money, doctor's office, home life displays and TCI former chief mining engineer Erskine Ramsay's Mining Lamp Collection. In addition to the various collections, the museum houses a gift shop, offices, restrooms and display-meeting area.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

**Topography:** The property is situated on a hill that gently slopes to the south. A level area, once the Dora High School Football Field, has been dug out of the hillside behind the Museum.

**Hydrology:** No prominent water features exist on the site. The property drains to Horse Creek, which is located one quarter mile to the northwest. Horse Creek was the original name for Dora.

**Geology:** The museum site, as well as most of the surrounding Dora Community, is situated above 6 honey combed coal mines.

**Vegetation:** The museum site has a well-maintained lawn area, with intermittently spaced large shade trees. A large heavily wooded nature area to the north and west borders the property.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

The following historic structures and equipment exist on the site.

### 1. The Alabama Mining Museum Building

The Alabama Mining Museum Building is constructed of sandstone with a wood truss roof. This building was constructed by the WPA and originally functioned as the Dora High School Gymnasium.

In addition to the various collections, the Museum houses a gift shop, offices, restrooms, and an art display area.

### 2. The Wyatt Elementary School

The Wyatt Elementary School is a white wood frame structure. This school is a former Walker County school for Blacks that was moved to the site.

### 3. The Walker Sports Hall of Fame Building

4. Alabama Central Railroad Locomotive

The Alabama Central Railroad Locomotive hauled coal and timber in Walker County between 1905 and 1961.

5. Birmingham Southern Railroad Ore Car

6. Caboose

The Frisco (now Burlington Northern) Railroad caboose car was moved to the site from Kansas.

7. The Oakman Railroad Depot

The Oakman Railroad Depot has been moved to the site and is currently being re-assembled. It is a one-story wood frame structure with separate waiting rooms formerly designated for blacks and whites. The interior also contains a brick, triangular-shaped fireplace.

Other Site Improvements

The site has a large gravel parking lot situated on the foundation of the former Dora High School building, which burned.

**Sources Consulted**

Documentation provided by Eddie Key, Director

Site Visit, 7/11/91